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Stories of Practical Life.

Leisure Moments.

"Are you fond of reading, Mrs. Lee?" said my good aunt Mary to a lady who sat plying the needle as industriously as if her bread depended upon her efforts.

"Yes," was the reply, "but I can't find time for it."

"Time!" exclaimed aunt Mary, while her large brown eyes quivered with astonishment; for she knew the lady was in easy circumstances—the wife of a physician in good practice.

"It is true," replied Mrs. Lee, in answer to my aunt's look of inquiry. "I know you will think I might find time, but I really cannot; it keeps me almost constantly employed to do our necessary sewing. How your daughter Alice can read as much as she does I never could imagine; I find her with a book in her hand half the time, and yet she has three children, and I only one."

"I might reply that one can find you quite as much of the time, with some bit of muslin, silk, or merino in your hand, that will never repay you for a tenth of the time you expend upon it. Now I admire industry, my dear Mrs. Lee, as much as any one, and I have often noticed how indefatigable you are with your needle; but will you allow me to tell you that I think your energies greatly misdirected? If you would not include such fancy work in the necessary sewing you spoke of, believe me, my dear, you will find plenty of time for reading."

"And yet one must have these things," answered Mrs. Lee with earnestness, "and it would amount to no small sum if I were to purchase all I use. Indeed, I pride myself not a little upon being able to do all my own embroidery, and I assure you it is quite an item of expense saved."

"And yet it is a sad thought," said aunt Mary, seriously, "that one must spend all their leisure moments in decorating the casket, without devoting any share to the improvement of the jewel it contains; especially when we think of the length of time each are respectively destined to endure. 'Excuse me, dear,' she continued, as she laid her hands tenderly upon her listener's arm; 'excuse me if I speak plainly, for nothing but the interest I feel in you and your sweet little daughter should tempt me to incur the risk of offending you.'"

"You do not offend me," said Mrs. Lee gently. "I know it takes a great deal of my time to do my ornamental sewing—especially for Ella's clothes. Perhaps I am wrong, but I have only one child, and it really affords me great pleasure to see her elegantly dressed."

"But if this can be done at the expense of time which should be devoted to greater interests, you do yourself a wrong, and an injury to her you love. When your little daughter has arrived to years of understanding, think you she would not a thousand times rather you had dressed her in plain clothes, than to have deprived yourself of mental pleasures, and—it may be—to have neglected the proper development and discipline of her mind? She is a child of more than ordinary intelligence, and to guide aright a mind like hers—to watch with proper care the unfolding of that bud of promise—will require that you should fortify and strengthen your own mind by a judicious course of reading and training which you can never acquire with your leisure moments so fully occupied."

"So you would have me give up everything of this kind, would you?" said Mrs. Lee.

"Not everything," replied aunt Mary; "but let us see if we cannot compromise. You carry the matter to extremes; even your husband's linen must have its delicate vine of needle-work upon the bosom—and then your morning dresses and collars would do very nicely, if they were not so elaborately embroidered; and as for Ella's clothes, I venture to assert there is scarcely an article in her wardrobe that has not cost you hours of unnecessary labor. A part of the time you spend in this way, my dear Mrs. Lee, you surely might devote to reading, and be wiser and happier by so doing. Let me advise you—set apart certain hours of each day for mental pursuits, consider them sacred to your own best interests and those of your child and let no trifling circumstance cause you to infringe upon them."

"Julia," exclaimed Dr. Lee, who had entered the room unperceived, and now laid his hand gently upon his wife's shoulder, "this is excellent advice, and you know the sentiments are my own, for you have often heard me express them. It is almost the only fault my wife possesses," he continued, turning to aunt Mary, "but it is one I have sought in vain to assist her in correcting."

"Don't, Alfred; pray do not say any more now," said Mrs. Lee imploringly; and the blue eyes she turned toward her husband were humid with tears.

"I will try to do as you wish, and will commence to-day, with that new work on mental culture which you brought me last week."

"Thank you, my darling;" and with a pleasant smile Dr. Lee turned the sweet face toward his own.

Bravely did the gentle wife fulfill her promise, and truly has she proved herself a suitable guide and instructor for the little Ella.

Leisure moments! who can tell their importance? Who can estimate the bearing their use or misuse may have upon our future lives?

The Torn Pocket.

"My dear," said Mr. Huston to his young wife, as he arose from the breakfast table, "I wish you would mend my overcoat pocket. The day is pleasant so that I can leave my coat off without inconvenience."

"Very well, my love," was the reply, and a moment after the front door closed upon the husband, who departed to the store where he filled the place of a responsible clerk.

Mrs. Huston rose to attend her domestic affairs, and occupied in them, soon forgot the torn pocket. About noon, she had finished her work, and having a spare hour before dinner, she sat down and took up a late novel. In this she continued to overlook the torn pocket, until the meal was over, and her husband again left the house; when going to look for the overcoat she found that he had put it on, the weather having grown colder.

"Oh! well, it will do to-night," said the wife. "I suppose he will scold when he finds I forgot it, but it can't be helped now."

Truth was, Mrs. Huston was what is called a "good easy woman," that is, she never intentionally harmed any one, but was only thoughtless and forgetful; her sins were those of omission. She found no uncertainty in dismissing an uncomfortable thought concerning the torn pocket, and resuming her novel, she was soon in the miseries of the heroine.

About dusk there came a ring at the bell. It was a magnetic ring, as it were, and expressed anger and great tribulation, if not both. It made the somewhat nervous Mrs. Huston start with a little shriek. She stopped reading and listened.

Directly the servant opened the door, and the step of the husband was heard, but heavier and quicker than usual. Her heart unaccountably began to beat faster. "Oh! dear," she said to herself, "what can be the matter?"

She was not long left in doubt. Her husband came at once into the sitting room, emotions of rage and suffering alternating perceptibly in his face. Frightened at a demeanor so unusual, the wife looked up, her lips parted in terror, unable to welcome him as usual.

"See what you have done!" cried Mr. Huston, passionately, taking off his overcoat, and turning the torn pocket inside out, and throwing the garment into the hearer's lap. "You have ruined me with your negligence."

"What have I done?" gasped the wife. "Has anything happened?"

"Anything happened? Didn't I tell you I was ruined? I have lost \$500, and been discharged because I lost it, and all because you didn't mend my pocket. Nor is it the first time, as you know, that you have neglected to do what you ought. You are always forgetting. I have often told you that you would rue it some day."

"But how did it happen? Can nothing be done?" timidly said the wife, after a while.

"How did it happen? In the most natural way possible. I had a note to pay for the firm in this part of the town. I brought the money up to dinner, and upon going out, put it in my overcoat pocket, supposing that you had mended the rent. When I reached the Bank the money was gone. It was then nearly three o'clock. Almost frantic, I came back within a few steps of the doors, hoping to find the money on the pavement; it was madness, as I might have known. I looked again and again, asking everybody I met. At last I went back to the store. But the news had preceded me. The notary had already been there to protest the note; and my employers would not hear one word of excuse. I was discharged on the spot."

As he ceased speaking, he threw himself on a chair by the table, and buried his face in his hands. His discharge was indeed a terrible blow. Without fortune or anything to depend on but his character, he saw, in the loss of his place, and consequent refusals of his employers to

recommend him, a future full of disasters. And for what? All because his wife could not remember the simplest duty.

No wonder in his hour of trouble that he turned away from her and buried his face in his hands. No wonder, that he felt angry with her, the author of his evil.

For a while Mrs. Huston knew not what to do. Tears ran down her cheeks, but she feared to approach her husband. "He will drive me away," she said to herself. "But I have deserved it all."

At last she ventured to approach him, and at last he was induced to listen. With many tears she promised never to be neglectful again. "It has been a lesson to me," said she, "which I will never forget."

Nor has she forgotten it. Years are past, and the Hustons are now comparatively well off, for after a while Mr. Huston obtained another situation, and finally became partner in the house.

But to this day, when the wife sees either of her daughters negligent, she calls the offender to her, and tells a warning story of the torn pocket.

A Little Hero.

Grace Greenwood writes the following little story—and a true one it is—for "The Little Pilgrim," a child's paper. She gets the facts from an incident described in the Hartford Daily Times some years ago, as having happened in Colt's Meadows.

In the city of Hartford, Connecticut, lives the hero of the true story I am about to relate—but no longer "little," as the perilous adventure, which made him for a time famous in his native town happened several years ago.

Our hero was then, a bright active boy of fourteen—the son of a mechanic. In the severe winter of 18—, the father worked in a factory, about a mile and a half from his home, and every day, the boy carried him his dinner, across a wide piece of meadow land.

One keen, frosty day, he found the snow on this meadow nearly two feet deep, and no traces of the little foot path remaining. Yet he ran on, as fast as possible, keeping himself warm by vigorous exercise, and brave cheerful thoughts.

When in the midst of the meadow—fully half a mile from any house, he suddenly felt himself going down, down, down! He had fallen into a well!

He sunk down into the dark, icy water, and rose immediately to the surface. There he had grasped hold of a plank, which had fallen into the well as he went down. One end of this rested on the bottom of the well—the other rose about four feet above the surface of the water.

The poor lad shouted for help until he was hoarse and almost speechless, but all in vain, as it was impossible for him to make himself heard for such a depth, and, at such a distance from any house. So at last he concluded that if he was to be saved at all he must save himself, and begin at once, as he was getting extremely cold in the water. So he went to work.

First, he drew himself up the plank and braced himself against the top of it and the wall of the well, which was of brick, and quite smooth. Then he pulled off his coat, and taking his pocket-knife, cut off his boots, that he might work to greater advantage. Then, with his feet against one side of the well, and his shoulders against the other, he worked his way up, the most fearful exertion, about half the distance to the top. Here he was obliged to pause, take breath and gather up his energies for the work yet before him. Far harder was it than all he had gone through, for the side of the well being from that point completely covered with ice, he must cut with his knife grasping places for his fingers, slowly and carefully, all the way up.

It was almost a hopeless attempt, but it was all he could do. And here the little hero lifted up his heart and prayed fervently for help, fearing he could never get out alone.

Doubtless the Lord heard his voice, calling from the deeps, and pitied him. He wrought no miracle to save him, but breathed into his heart a yet larger measure of calmness and courage, strengthening him to work out his own deliverance. It is in this way that God oftenest answers our prayers, when we call upon him in time of trouble.

After this, the little hero cut his way upward, inch by inch. His wet stockings froze to the ice and kept his feet from slipping, but his shirt was quite worn from his shoulders, ere he reached the top. He did reach it at last—crawled out into the snow, and lay down for a moment to rest—panting out his breathe, in little white clouds, on the clear frosty air.

He had been two hours and a half in the well!

His clothes were froze to his body—but he no longer suffered with cold, as, full of joy and thankfulness, he ran on to the factory, where his good father was waiting and wondering.

The poor man was obliged to go without his dinner that day—but you may be sure he cared little about that, while listening, with tears in his eyes, to the thrilling story his son had to relate to him.

He must have been very proud of the boy that day, as he wrapped him up in his own warm overcoat, and took him home to "mother."

And how that mother must have wept and smiled over the lad, and kissed him, and thanked God for him!

I have not heard of the "little Hero," for two or three years, but I trust he is growing up into a brave heroic man—and I hope he will never forget the Heavenly Friend who did not forget him in the hour of his great need.

There is an old saying that truth lies at the bottom of a well.

I trust that this brave boy found and brought up from there, this truth—*God helps those who help themselves.*

Marrying an Editor.

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Peter Snow, an editor's wife, I well remember the day when Mr. Snow asked me to become his wife. I confess, I liked Mr. Snow, and, thinking it would be a very fine thing to be an editor's wife, I said 'yes,' as pretty as I knew how, and I became Mrs. Snow. I have seen ten years of married life, and find my husband to be an amiable, good-natured man. He always spends his evenings at home, and is, in that respect, a model man; but he always brings home piles of exchanges, which is only limited by the length of his arms, and reads, while I patch the knees and elbows of our boy's pantaloons and coat. After we have had a Quaker meeting of an hour's length, I break the silence by asking:

"Mr. Snow, did you order that coal I spoke to you about?"

"What did you say, my dear?" he asks, after a few moment's silence.

"Did you order that coal I spoke to you about?"

"Indeed, my dear, I am sorry, but I forgot all about it. It shall come to-morrow."

"Another hour's silence, which is relieved by the baby's crying, and, rather liking to hear a noise of some sort, I make no effort to quiet him."

"My dear," says Mr. Snow, after he has cried a minute or so, "you had better give the baby some catnip tea to quiet him; he troubles me."

"The baby is still; another hour passes without a breath of noise. Becoming tired of silence, I take a lamp and retire for the night, leaving Mr. S. so engaged with his paper that he does not see me leave the room. Toward midnight he comes to bed, and just as he has fallen to sleep, the baby takes a notion to cry again. I rise as quietly as possible, and try to still him. While I am walking the room with a small Snow in my arms, our next—a boy of three years—begins to scream at the top of his lungs. What can I do? There is no other course but to call Mr. Snow, so I call out:

"Mr. Snow! Mr. Snow!"

"The third time he starts up, and replies:

"What, Tim, more copy?"

"As though I was Tim, that little imp running about the office, I reply, rather tartly:

"No, I don't want any more copy—I have had enough of that to last me my lifetime—I want you to see what Tommy is crying about."

"Mr. Snow makes a desperate effort to rouse himself; as Tommy stops to take a breath, he falls asleep again, leaving me to pace the room in as much vexation as I can comfortably contain. The next morning at breakfast, when I give Mr. Snow an account of last night's adventure, he replies:

"Indeed, my dear, I am very sorry the children troubled you."

"This is always the way. If I complain, it is, 'indeed, my dear, I am very sorry.'"

"But should the very same thing occur the subsequent night, directly before his eyes, very likely he would not see or know anything about it, unless it happened to interrupt his train of ideas. Then he would propose catnip tea; but before I can get it into the infant's stomach, he will be far away into the realms of thought, leaving me not a little vexed at his stupidity."

"Mr. Snow knows the nature of every paper published in England and the United States, but he cannot, for the life of him, tell the names of his children. He knows precisely the years of every American journal, but he does not know the

age of his own baby. He knows how every contributor looks, but I do not believe he can tell whether my eyes are black or blue.

"The world says Mr. Snow is getting rich. All I know is, he gives me money to clothe our boys, and that, too, without a complaint of poverty. I hope the world is right in opinion, and when I am satisfied it is, I shall advise him to resign his editorial honors, and spend a few months in becoming acquainted with his wife and children. The little ones will feel much flattered in making the acquaintance of so literary a man."

THE WHEEL OF LIFE.—Man is the most destructive of beings. He pursues the great leviathan within the polar circle to light his home. He ransacks the sea and land in every latitude; he slays and plunders with unsparing hand. He enslaves the horse, camel, and elephant, he robs and slaughters the ox, the sheep, the swine, the bee, the beaver, and the worm; the fowls do not escape him, and he levies taxes on everything taxable. In this manner he gathers his food and his raiment, the balsam of his diseases, and the fuel that cheers his hearth. Despite the ravages of diseases, and violent and natural deaths he increases in number, every season opens to him as bountiful a supply as before. In civilized life he is often a prey to numberless accidents, to the beasts of the fields, and the monsters of the deep. If he escape these, at the last he becomes food for worms. Man eats his mutton, and the lion eats man. One law encircles, directs, and confines all created beings—each within its proper sphere. The evil that befalls one, the other cannot escape—disease and death are the lot of all.

THE ADVANTAGES OF NECESSITY.—If every man were wise and virtuous, capable to discern the best use of "time, and resolute to practice it, it might be granted, we think, without hesitation, that total liberty would be a blessing; and that it would be desirable to be left at large to the exercise of religious and social duties, without the interruption of importunate avocations.

But since felicity is relative, and that which is the means of happiness to one man may be to another the cause of misery, we are to consider, what state is best adapted to human nature in its present degeneracy and frailty. And, surely, to the far greater number it is highly expedient, that they should by some settled scheme of duties, be rescued from the tyranny of caprice; that they should be driven on by necessity through the paths of life, with their attention confined to a stated task, that they may be less at leisure to deviate into mischief at the call of folly.

PLEASURE OF CONTENTMENT.—I have a rich neighbor who is always so busy that he has no leisure to laugh; the whole business of his life is to get money, and more money. He is still drudging on, saying that Solomon says, "The diligent hand maketh rich." And it is true, indeed; but he considers not that it is not in the power of riches to make a man happy, for it was wisely said by a man of great observation, "that there be as many miseries beyond riches as on this side of them." We see but the outside of the rich man's happiness; few consider him to be like the silk-worm, that, when she seems to play, it is at the very same time spinning her own bowels, and "consuming herself. And this many rich men do—loading themselves with corroding cares, to keep what they have already got. Let us, therefore, be thankful for health and competence, and above all, for a quiet and eternal existence.

JUDGE NOT RASHLY.—Alas! how unreasonable as well as unjust a thing it is for any to censure the infirmities of another, when we see that even good men are not able to dive through the mystery of their own! Be assured there can be but little honesty, without thinking as well as possible of others, and there can be no safety without thinking humbly and distrustfully of ourselves.

THE BEST MEDICINE.—Good, wholesome food, and temperance, with pure, cold water to drink and bathe in, with fresh air, plenty of exercise, and a clear conscience, are said to do more to restore or preserve health, and prolong life, than every doctor and medicine in the universe.

OUR COMMON INDEBTEDNESS.—Of those whom Providence has qualified to make any additions to human knowledge, the number is extremely small; and what can be added by each single mind, even of this superior class, is very little. The greater part of mankind must owe far the greater part of it, to the information of others.

Mechanics' Wives.

Speaking of the middle ranks of life, the solid and best portion of society, a modern writer makes the following excellent remarks:

"There we behold woman in all her glory; not a doll to carry silks and jewels; not a puppet to be flattered by profane adoration; always jostled out of the place which nature and society would assign her, by sensuality or contempt; admired, but not respected; desired, but not esteemed; ruling by passion, not affection; imparting her weakness, not her constancy, to the sex she would exalt; the source and mirror of vanity; we see her as a wife; partaking the cares and cheering the anxiety of a husband, dividing his toil by her domestic diligence, spreading cheerfulness around him for his sake; sharing the decent refinements of the world without being vain of them, placing all her joys and her happiness in the man she loves. As a mother, we find her the affectionate, the ardent instructress of the children whom she has tended from their infancy, training them up to thought and virtue, to piety and benevolence; addressing them as rational beings, and preparing them to become men and women in their turn. Such mothers' daughters make the best wives in the world."

Firmness of Purpose.

A firm, energetic purpose, and a steady object of pursuit, are the inevitable prelude to success. It is not the half formed determination to resist, and the unstrung nerve, that defeat the enemy in battle, and send him subdued from the field; but it is the bold determination and the steady nerve that accomplish the purpose.

Men in all ages of the world have understood and practiced upon this principle; they have gone forth to the battle field with trembling step and coward hearts, ready to yield to the first charge from their enemy; for they have known that if they would conquer they must not falter, but fight on, having for their watchword victory or death. Would that men would act thus in the field of life. We should not then see so many multitudes floating down the stream of time in calm content, trusting their worldly fortune to chance, like the unsilked pilot, who watches upon the shores of time for victims to destroy.

Strange it is that men embark upon the sea of time with such a blind guide, and no rudder to direct their course. Are their time and talents of so little consequence that it matters not how they are used?

LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS.—Step into the street and ask the first man you meet what he is thinking about, and if he answers you correctly, it will be future happiness, or that which he thinks will promote his happiness. So of the thousands who pass you day by day. One inquires—How can I accumulate gold? Another—How shall I acquire fame? A third—What shall I do to obtain the good will and respect of mankind? But few indeed—not one in a thousand perhaps—would make the inquiry—Where can I find virtue? how can I obtain religion? where is God and Heaven? Among the countless throng who are searching for happiness, scarcely one looking in the right place and asking of the correct source. The tinsel and glare of the world—its gold and its ambition—urge people on in the intricate and thorny paths of life, until they become disgusted and painfully declare—there is no happiness here. Ah, if they but sought for virtue and Heaven we should hear less complaints, and life, instead of being a wearisome abode, would be the glorious prelude to a blessed and eternal existence.

THE HOME OF TASTE.—How easy it is to be neat—to be clean! How easy to arrange the rooms with the most graceful propriety. How easy it is to invest our houses with the truest elegance. Elegance resides not with the upholsterers or the draper; it is not in the mosaics, the carpets, the rose wood, the mahogany, the candelabra, or the marble ornaments; it exists in the spirit presiding over the chambers of the dwelling. Contentment must always be most graceful; it sheds serenity over the scene of its abode; it transforms a waste into a garden. The home lighted by these intimations of a nobler and brighter life may be wanting in much which the discontented desire; but to its inhabitants it will be a place, far outlying the oriental in brilliancy and glory.

BAD SOIL.—He that sows his grain upon marble will have many a hungry belly before his harvest.

A friend proposes to send us a gray eagle. We should rather have a yellow one.